

## JOHN F. COOKE, JR., 1927-1970<sup>1</sup>

John F. Cooke, Jr. was Assistant Professor of Botany at Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when he died of an aortic aneurysm while driving his car in that city. Known as "Jack" to his many friends at The Ohio State University and Cornell University, where he did graduate work, his career as a university professor and professional botanist was short-lived.

Born 7 August 1927 in Woodbury, New Jersey, Jack attended Merion Grammar School in Merion, Pennsylvania, from 1933 to 1941, and Morse High School, Bath, Maine, from 1941 to 1945. Upon graduation from high school, Jack enlisted in the United States Navy, serving as a Reserve Seaman, 2nd Class. His tour of duty was for thirteen months, nine of which were aboard the U. S. S. *DEVICE*, a mine sweeper. Beginning in 1946, Jack enrolled as an undergraduate in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, where he took various courses. Botany and Floriculture were his major interests, and he graduated in June 1950 with a B.A. in Botany.

For 2 years following graduation, Jack was employed by the W. Atlee Burpee Company of Philadelphia. During summers, he worked at their Fordhook Farms in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, doing planting, maintenance, flower trial rating, and pest control. In the winters he was in Philadelphia involved with seed ordering, the bulb department, and catalogue mailing; later he served in the purchasing department. From 1953 to 1956, he was employed as a garden superintendent by the Board of Education of Cleveland, Ohio. While there he also was assistant supervisor of greenhouses for West Technical High School during 1953-1954. Horticulture as a science and as a practical phase of business was taught as a part of the science curriculum. Jack directed three to eight individuals. Later, 1954-1956, he became assistant to the instructor in charge of the school landscaping program. He became involved in the fall landscaping and spring planting program of the Cleveland Public Schools. In addition, he taught general gardening to adult night-school classes. From 1956 to 1960 employment was with S. C. Johnson, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, S. S. Pennock, Co. (wholesale florists), Philadelphia, and with J. A. Pullen Greenhouses, Houma, Louisiana. In the last company he was a partner.

Jack returned to Cornell University in 1960 and enrolled in the Graduate School for study in the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture. He held a graduate assistantship in floriculture where he was teaching assistant for the course in Taxonomy of Cultivated Plants. He demonstrated great ability in handling and instructing students, displaying strong initiative in presenting the subject matter. In the latter part of his term at Cornell University, Jack was given full charge of instructing in the lab-

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution from the Department of Botany (Paper No. 835) and the Herbarium, The Ohio State University.

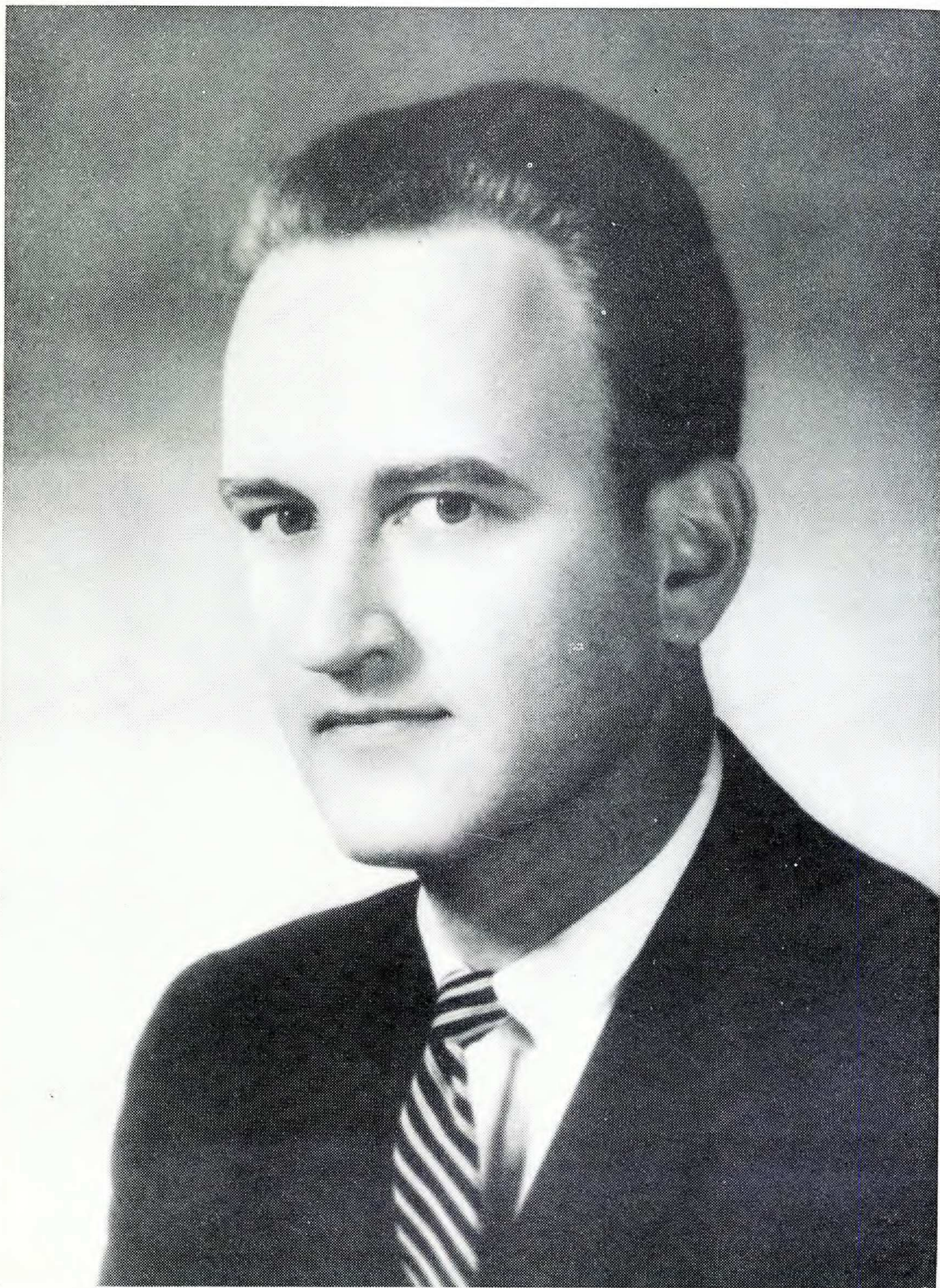
oratory, of collecting plant materials used in classes and of maintaining the teaching herbarium. His research involved the cytology of and hybridization within and between *Achimenes* and *Smithiantha*. He produced the first tetraploid hybrid,  $\times$  *Eucodonopsis*, between these two genera, which was entered into trade with the cultivar name, 'Diamond Lil.' His M. S. Thesis, entitled, *Interspecific hybridization in the genus Achimenes P. Br.* (183 pp. + v, and several plates, diagrams, and tables), was completed under the direction of Professor Robert E. Lee. The M. S. degree was awarded in January 1963.

Jack enrolled for graduate work in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at The Ohio State University in January 1963. He studied in the area of experimental plant taxonomy with emphasis on cytotaxonomy and cytogenetics under the guidance of Professors T. Richard Fisher and Elton F. Paddock. He assisted and taught in the General Botany and Local Flora courses, and assisted in Plant Genetics, Basic Concepts in Botany, and Taxonomy of Vascular Plants. His background in horticulture and floriculture made him one of the most diverse students in the taxonomy program during the time Dr. Fisher was directing it. Jack frequently drew upon his knowledge of horticultural plants for examples in his teaching. The Ph. D. degree was awarded in the summer of 1968, with the completion of his dissertation, *The chromatography and cytology of some cultivated taxa of the genus Hosta Tratt.* (97 pp.), completed under the direction of Professor Fisher.

Jack was elected to two honor societies, Pi Alpha Xi (Floriculture Honorary Fraternity) and Sigma Xi, and was a member of several societies, the American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society, American Society for Horticultural Science, American Society of Plant Taxonomists, Botanical Society of America, International Association for Plant Taxonomy, and the Ohio Academy of Science. College teaching as a career began in the fall of 1968, when Jack became Assistant Professor of Botany at Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he taught courses in general botany and plant taxonomy. His new career, just beginning, was short-lived. He died at the age of 42 on 12 January 1970.

Jack never married. He is survived by his parents and one sister. Interment was in Oak Grove Cemetery, Bath, Maine. At Morse High School in Bath, Jack's parents established in his memory The Dr. John F. Cooke, Jr. scholarship to be presented annually to a graduating student planning to major in one or more of the life sciences, with a preference for botany.

Jack had many interests other than those connected with plant science. He enjoyed the study of language, especially the derivation, history, and precise use of words. He was fun-loving; he enjoyed pleasant little jokes—those played on him as well as those he played on others. Jack could tell a good story, and he laughed easily. He liked cooking and was always on the lookout for new and exotic foods. The guests he entertained in his home were sure to enjoy the atmosphere of warm genial hospitality, the good food (prepared by Jack himself), and the sparkling conversation. All in all, he was a thoroughly delightful person, a highly respected colleague, and a



Dr. John F. Cooke, Jr. (photograph taken in the fall of 1964)

staunch friend. His passing has left an abysmal void in the hearts of all of us who were privileged to be his associates.

Publications:

1955

Gardening in the Cleveland Public Schools. *Plant Life* 11: 30-31.

1962

The chromosome number of *Achimenes woodii* Morton. *Baileya* 10: 53.

1963

The stigma of *Achimenes glabrata*. *Baileya* 11: 47.

1965

Plantain lilies bloom in shady areas. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer Garden Planning Guide*. 23 April. p. 11.

1966

Trumpet best known of four types of lilies. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer Garden Planning Guide*. 15 April. p. 14.

Hybridization within and between *Achimenes* P. Br. and *Smithiantha* Kuntze (Gesneriaceae). *Baileya* 14: 92-101. (with Robert E. Lee).

A new tetraploid  $\times$  *Eucodonopsis*. *African Violet Magazine* 20 (2): 45-56.

1967

$\times$  *Eucodonopsis* 'Diamond Lil.' *The Gloxinian* 17 (3): 25-26.

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